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PUNCH



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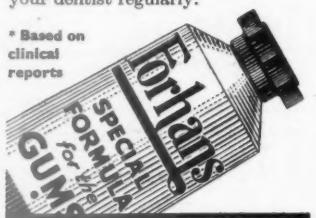




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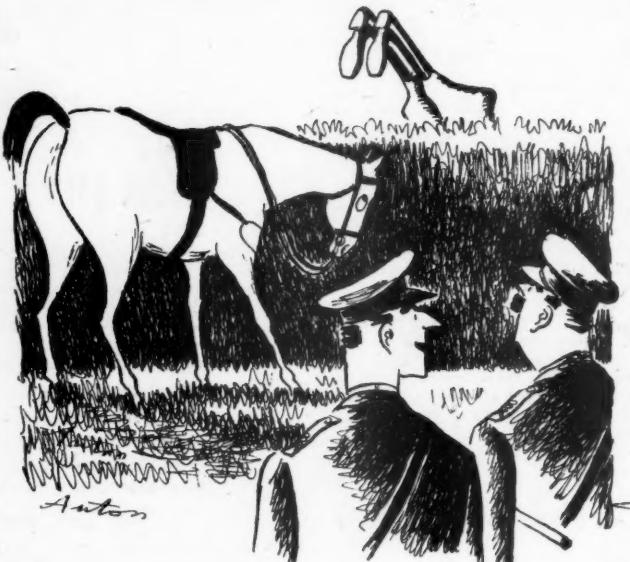
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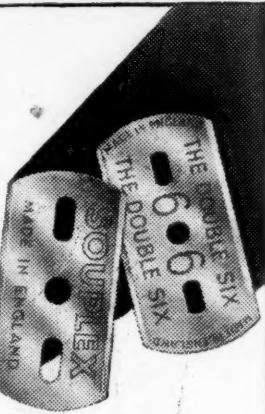


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You're shaved
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Millions of these famous blades go to the Forces on all Fronts. Small supplies are available for the public from time to time. Souplex Ltd., Morecambe, Lancashire.

To-day

British Railways are on Active Service, proud to be playing their part in the liberation of Europe and the Far East

To-morrow

British Railways will be on Public Service again, striving to give you better and even more efficient travelling conditions than ever before



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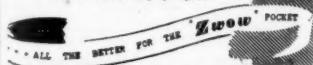
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Good drapers and stores everywhere stock GOR-RAY Skirts with the "ZWOW" Pocket in a variety of styles.



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Issued by: C. STILLITZ, Royal Leamington Spa.

GOR-RAY
Skirts

December 20 1944

PUNCH or The London Charivari

v



Christmas greetings from CALEY, makers of FORTUNE chocolates
—and the wish that before very long all may once more enjoy
the delights of good FORTUNE . . .

MANY DIFFERENT UNIFORMS . . .
BUT STILL THE ONE COLLAR

Never was man's dress so varied as in these war-time days of uniforms, but men still choose 'Van Heusen.' In 'Civvie Street,' too, men spend their coupons on 'Van Heusen' Collars which won their popularity by their good looks, comfort and long life.

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Regd. Trade Mark
SEMI-STIFF COLLARS

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ESSE Major Cookers in a Canteen Kitchen.

Esse raises the standard of Canteen Cooking

Esse Cooking Equipment can always be relied upon to get the very best out of everything cooked—flavour, food value and maximum quantity. In the roomy, fume-free ovens of the ESSE Major Heat

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What are they up to now?



Hartley Headlamps Masks

have played an all-important part in safeguarding war transport at night. Now, Hartley technicians are applying themselves to new ideas and developments for post-war production, and the result should be as great a contribution to peace as the Hartley Mask has been to war. It is premature to announce details at this juncture, but in your own interest, remember the name . . .

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As in the cultured homes of bygone generations Minton China grew to such high favour, so upon the tables of that Brave New World beyond this present travail, the loveliness of Minton is assured of appreciation wherever life is lived with taste and dignity and beauty.

MINTON

The World's Most Beautiful China

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For its delicious flavour, for the way it warms and cheers, for the grand feeling of well-being it gives, take a cup of hot Bovril. Cook with Bovril; it helps to make your war-time dishes tastier—and remember, Bovril spread on toast with snacks is most appetising. The war has changed many familiar things, but the high quality of Bovril remains the same.

Inspired by Francis Wheatley's famous 'Cries of London'



Turnips & Carrots ho

Old London was not less quiet because it lacked motor traffic. From sunrise to sunset, a bewildering number of street cries echoed through the streets and squares. But as shops grew in size and number, the Cries of London grew fainter. In like fashion, as the present war progressed, Bachelor's English Canned Fruits and Vegetables became scarcer in the shops. The Forces had first claim—and will have, until Victory brings Peace and opportunity—for shops to stock more

Batchelor's

ENGLISH CANNED
—FRUITS & VEGETABLES—





PUNCH

Or
The London Charivari



Vol. CVCII No. 5422

December 20 1944

Charivaria

A FURTHER assurance has been given that Hitler has not retired from the direction of the war. This can be taken in two ways, if you look at the map.

○ ○
A party of neutral correspondents has visited Paris. Thus begins a wave of first neutrals into countries the Germans were last out of.



Jumping to a Conclusion

"Some people are inclined to gambol on the early end of the war."—Schoolboy's essay.

○ ○
A journal reports a sudden return of strolling musicians. This is much less disturbing than the slow approach of a sudden trumpet.

○ ○
A case of whisky was stolen from a car. No small loss. At this time of year whisky is worth about £5 a bottle in American money.

○ ○
Building trade officials are replying to prefabricated house propaganda with brick-and-mortar fire.

○ ○
The Chicago discussions suggest that after the war we shall be able to fly very rapidly from impasse to impasse.

○ ○
An American non-skid device enables one to carve a turkey without its jumping off the dish. It is nothing, however, to the devices by which most British housewives nearly got one.

○ ○
The reported phenomenon of two distinct suns appearing over the Straits of Dover tends to confirm recent suspicions that someone at the Ministry of Information has been carelessly allowing the weather to overlap.

A military writer doubts whether the German Army will stand very much of being bottled up inside the Reich. After all, they're not the German Navy.

○ ○
"Leeks are a good stand-by," says a cookery note. Their reduction from the essential food ranks is a further sign that peace is near.

○ ○
What annoys Mussolini is that the world is not asking whether he is dead, arrested, ill or mad or anything.

○ ○
As an essayist points out, opportunities hardly exist to-day for the reckless squandering of fortunes as they did in the times of our ancestors. Still, there's always Christmas shopping.



○ ○
The railway companies' official decision not to provide extra travelling facilities over the holiday finally puts paid to the hope that a few more corridors might be scheduled for Christmas.

○ ○
We hear of one patriotic citizen who posted so early for Christmas that he got the gift back just before the festive season and too late to send it on to somebody else.



○ ○
An American soldier expressed surprise that there were no skyscrapers in London, and added that he had never seen a sky that needed them more.

○ ○
Asking a Lot
"BLUTHNER Pianist wanted, upright and grand."—Advt. in Yorks paper.

○ ○
The London County Council have banned all-in wrestling. Including that at bus stops?

Stepping-up Geography

NOBODY who thinks the world is too much with us should look at *A War Atlas for Americans*. But it fascinates me. It is published with a preface by the American Director of War Information and it tosses the world about from page to page like a toy balloon. It plays netball with the habitable globe. It is almost disrespectful to the Five Continents and the Seven Seas. It thinks nothing of turning Norway upside down or standing the Iberian peninsula on its head. It revels in doing what most atlases don't do. It plays old Harry with the oceans. On one page it projects this petty orb (10°S, 170°E) so that there is almost no land in it, except Australasia, on another it hurls the wretched pill at you from the middle of the polar seas.

You like arrows? You can hardly help liking arrows. The *War Atlas for Americans* has enough arrows (large grey arrows) to equip the bowmen of Agincourt, or to put a battalion of men into convict's uniform. And not only arrows. It shadows the land-marks with pincer-movements and gigantic octopodes, showing the penetrative designs of the Axis powers. It makes the two wars one. It renders, as a famous leader-writer might put it, the whole of this spherical Armageddon pellucid-plain. It gives you all the routes by which we ants may steam or march or fly. It marks, with symbols, all places where iron, coal, tungsten, aluminium, zinc, lead, wheat, copper, sugar, manganese and oases are to be found. In the letterpress alongside the maps it dashes through the war, front by front, from the German menace in the West to the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. That is, of course, the delicate tentative way in which the Japanese put forward their claim to the control of the universe.

And whenever this remarkable work thinks you may be getting a little bored by the description of battles on land, sea and air about which you have read so often and so much, it knocks you down with a good vernacular phrase. You get up, rubbing your eyes, and go on, wondering a little whether sentences of such a kind will gain a place in the American histories of the future, as they will certainly not, I suppose, in ours.

"The cards were heavily stacked against the British . . . But from the end of October (1941), they were confident that they could take it—and eventually dish it out."

"The Bay of Biscay kicks up a lot of rough water."

"The fall of France in June 1940 blew the lid off the Mediterranean powder-keg."

"Mussolini looked to Hitler . . . Too late, he discovered that he had invited a camel into his tent."

"The Nazis wore tight wool underclothes, instead of leather, and they froze when they got overheated. They grew beards which iced."

"The Russian drives throughout the rest of 1943 and in early 1944 not only won back great gobs of territory, but destroyed large pieces of the Wehrmacht."

"Japan, bold as she was, could scarcely risk an all-out drive on Singapore, without first crippling, by a quick sneak punch, American sea and air power in the Pacific."

"The Japs made the mistake of their lives when they failed to follow up their advantage at Pearl Harbour. The American Navy was maimed, but the report of its death proved to be exaggerated."

The text, I learn, was drafted under the guidance of Professor Harold Sprout of Princeton University. And how! He certainly knows the way to put plums into the cake of history. Nothing is omitted, from the importance

of the blockade, and the U-boat war on convoys, to the contrast of our methods of bombing with those of the Americans, from the vast employment of civilians to the vital position of the Middle East; and how calmly from his points of projection do the Professor and his fellow-workers contemplate the various possibilities of the counter-offensive!

"Three great European peninsulas reach Southward into Central Europe. The existing roads and railways follow the few well-defined ditches which the rivers have carved through the ages."

I like ditches. Or again, how coolly do they discuss the achievement of reinforcing Russia!

"Another Pacific supply route to Russia branched north and went through the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean. Freighters and Bunkers unloaded at Northern Siberian posts; goods were transhipped down navigable rivers as far as possible, hauled by truck on rail to the Trans-Siberian Railway and then routed to industrial centers or combat zones. The three principal rivers used were the Lena, Yenisei and the Ob."

I never thought of routing anything through the Ob since I left my preparatory school, and even then, not earnestly. I think the gulf of Ob is about five hundred miles long, and the little rivulet itself trickles along about two thousand miles before it gets there. I didn't think of railing or trucking in boyhood when I routed goods this way to Russian centers across the Pacific through the Bering Sea. I merely used a couple of reindeer and a yak. But times have changed since then.

The last two projections of the shuttle-cocked earth are encircled by rings with bull's-eye centres, and entitled "Target Berlin" and "Target Tokyo," and the text says "The Militarists in Berlin and Tokyo started this war but the massed, angered Forces of Common Humanity will finish it."

Here's to that Christmas—or that Thanksgiving Day!
EVOE.

"NEW YORK, Oct. 18 (A.A.P.).—An original Dickens manuscript, 'Our Neutral Friend,' was sold at auction for £5300.

The manuscript was completed in 1865, and consists of 468 pages, written in Dickens's small handwriting with innumerable corrections throughout."—Australian paper.

Well, there was one little mistake he missed.

"THEY ALSO SERVE"

THEY are brave, these people who, behind the scenes, whether at home or in the factories, go quietly about their essential tasks. Even when they are bombed and lose their homes and cherished possessions, their grateful appreciation of the help given them through the PUNCH COMFORTS FUND proclaims the spirit which cannot be broken.

The privilege of service to them is extended to you. If you have helped us with contributions before will you please help us again? If this is your first introduction to the Fund will you please become a subscriber? Donations will be gratefully acknowledged by Mr. Punch at PUNCH COMFORTS FUND, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.



SERGEANT-MAJOR CHRISTMAS



"Let's hope this will be the last time I shall have to be Mother Christmas."

Good Wishes from the Ministry

For information and
retention:—

Mr. Whyte-Hawle,
Room 5432.

DAD/DIP TR. FOLDER 123.
FESTIVALS, CELEBRATION OF.

GREETINGS, THE SEASON'S

WITH reference to the period designated Yuletide which (essentially centring on the 25th day of December, each year) by established custom is deemed to include the day preceding and the 12 days immediately following, i.e., from the 24th day of December to, nominally, the night of the 6th of January of the year following, these dates included, it is the desire of the undersigned to communicate to you his felicitations, in that, throughout the above-mentioned period (applicable specifically in the present instance to the so-termed Yuletide of 1944/1945), you may by Providence be accorded a condition of well-being, as to (a) heart, (b) mind, and (c) body; the like blessings—flowing from the same source as in your case applies—to be bestowed, it is hoped, upon your domestic and related personnel.

In conjunction with the above-mentioned greeting

(considered to be appropriate to the celebration indicated) and in addition to the sentiments expressed therein, in similar spirit it is desired to acquaint you that the salutation referred to is to be considered in its scope to be extended so as to include the desire of the undersigned that there be vouchsafed to you, as from the 1st prox., a full and complete year, i.e., 365 (three hundred and sixty-five) days, of material plenitude, the envisaged measure of the same to be regarded as not less than would be your own requisition were you, in no wise restricted, to draft and finally to approve a comprehensive and clearly defined specification of personal requirements in respect of the period referred to.

It is hoped that meteorological conditions will continue clement for you.

Dictated (but not signed) by

B. L. A. HEVYWEATHER,
Deputy Assistant Director,
Directorate of Indirect Procedure.

DAD/DIP
Christmas, 1944.

Strange Scene in Consulting Room

THE trouble with me is," I said, "that I can't drink gin."

The doctor raised his eyebrows, pursed his lips, dipped his pen in the ink and wrote a few words in a sort of book.

"Do you want to drink gin?" he asked.

"Yes, doctor," I said.

He swivelled round in his chair, gave me a hard look, said "H'm!" twice, took hold of my wrist and held it absent-mindedly for a few seconds, swivelled away again and added something very short to what he had already written; in fact I think he only crossed a "T."

"You forgot your watch," I said.

"Eh?" he said. "Watch?"

"When you were feeling my pulse," I explained.

"Bless my soul!" he cried, throwing himself back in his chair and laughing heartily. "A doctor can tell whether the pulse-beat is regular without bothering with watches. You're thinking of nurses in hospitals."

"Listen, doctor," I said. "Do you ever go clean smack over backwards when you do that? I mean, do you?"

"When I do what?"

"When you throw yourself back in your chair and laugh heartily."

A dull flush crept slowly up his large white (or middle-white, as pig-fanciers say) face. Born in the deep creases about his mouth and chin, it spread irresistibly over the pendulous cheeks, lapped the eyes so closely that one almost expected to hear a slight hissing noise, and finally burnt itself out in the thin stubble above his temples.

A bit of weather-lore from the *Georgics*, neatly translated from the original by Conington or Mackail perhaps, and a favourite of mine at school, came back from the past.

"When the face of the moon is suffused with a ruddy blush," I quoted, "wind may be expected."

He took it amiss.

"Get out of here!" he said. "What the devil do you mean by coming in here and behaving like—like a dragged-up popinjay? Impudent scoundrel! If I had my way—"

He was trembling all over, and his face which had looked so hearty a moment since was now as white (or off-white, as interior decorators say) as the ceiling. I was alarmed at his appearance, and said so.

"Doctor," I said, "I am alarmed at your appearance."

"Never mind my appearance!" he shouted. "Get out of my consulting room this instant!"

For a brief moment I thought he was going to commit mayhem—and mayhem, in all probability, of a particularly horrible kind. That is the worst of doctors. When they have murdered you they cut you up skilfully and send the pieces to what are called accommodation addresses. This is the sort of thing the B.M.A. would hotly deny, but they are a biased lot.

Now nobody wants to be sent to an accommodation address, still less to several simultaneously. I did my best to soothe him. I warned him of the danger of over-excitement at his age and poured a little water down the back of his neck from a handy carafe.

"Lucky this carafe was handy," I pointed out.

He made no reply either to this or to a number of other observations of a similar nature. I accordingly formed the opinion that he was deaf, and I thereupon seized his stethoscope which was about his neck and thrust it into his ears. I then took hold of the business end of the thing and blew down it.

This caused his cheeks to puff out, a thing I have never seen before or since.

"Are you receiving me O.K.?" I shouted.

It was at once apparent from his expression that he was receiving me quite O.K., and I therefore decided to come without more ado to the object of my visit.

"You may be wondering," I said, tapping my pipe out on his head, "what is the purpose of this call, and why my behaviour has been from first to last a little unorthodox. Ah! I see that you have been speculating on this matter. Well, the fact is I want you to certify me."

"Certify you?" he whispered.

"Yes, doctor. Certify me good and proper."

"I can't," he cried, and there was real agony in his voice.

"It takes two to do that."

"Well, here we are," I said.

"Two doctors, you fool."

"Oh, I see. Then it's no go. Not that it matters, because as a matter of fact that wasn't the real reason why I came to see you. The real reason was that I had an argument with a friend about something that came in a book called *Bad Blood Butters No Parsnips*, a murder story actually. There was a doctor in it and—"

"If you don't go within one minute," he said, putting out a hand for the phone, "I shall call a policeman."

"You can't," I said. "He's outside, guarding my bicycle. Well, this doctor got angry about something and said to another character, 'Get out of my consulting-room this instant!' and we argued about whether a man would ever say anything so ponderous as 'my consulting-room' when he was in a rage. I said he would simply say 'Get out of here,' or something like that, but my friend (who is outside, as a matter of fact, guarding the policeman) maintained that he might easily say the whole thing in full. We were unable to agree, and bets were laid. The matter could only be settled by experiment. I now find, to my surprise, that both expressions are used and the bet is consequently off. Nevertheless, I should like to thank you most warmly for your co-operation."

It took him some time to cool down, but in the end he was really very nice about it. He said it was a monstrous affront. Then he said such conduct might have been excusable in a man half my age. Then he said he had never heard of such a thing in all his life, adding that he had a good mind to have me up for assault. And finally he decided to see the funny side of the thing, and threw himself back in his chair, laughing heartily.

I didn't stay to pick him up. I was afraid that, seeing him lying there upside-down on the floor, I might be tempted to tell him the *real* reason for my call. So I went away quickly; and now he will never know.

Neither, for that matter, will you.

H. F. E.

○ ○

"Chip and Fish Shop Wanted, reasonable; no house in exchange."—*Advt. in Yorks paper.*

What more can you expect, these days?

Statistics Corner

"Will parishes who so far have made no payment do so without fail before the end of the year and so save my grey hairs. There are 68 of them at the time of writing."—*Diocesan magazine.*

At the Pictures

FACT AND FICTION

CONSIDERING literal exactitude rather than general sense, I would suggest that many of the people seeing *Western Approaches* (Director: PAT JACKSON) do not grasp a great deal more of the English dialogue than they do of the German: for when it is not hoarsely yelled or mumbled in an accent for which—because of its authenticity—they may be unprepared, it often suffers from woolly reproduction. I make this of course as an observation, not as a criticism; *Western Approaches*, the Crown Film Unit's feature-length documentary about the Merchant Navy, is a very fine piece of work and no such triviality as a missed phrase or two of dialogue can have any real bearing on its merits.

Admittedly, we have been told before by other films most of what this one tells us; but never so well, and never in Technicolor. Colour gives immense added impressiveness to its picture of a small boat in a big sea (a real big sea, not tons of water in a studio tank) and the difficulties, misery and grandeur of men battling with it. There are no professional actors (all the men are real seamen), and the narrative, though it has a "plot"—U-boat allows lifeboat to decoy rescuing ship into torpedo-range, but is outwitted—seems in no way contrived. This is a first-rate film, a valuable experience, and you should make an effort to see it.

From a piece without any stars at all, we move to one that would never even have existed but for the stars concerned: *I Love a Soldier* (Director: MARK SANDRICH). It is openly admitted in the publicity that this one was manufactured as a "vehicle" for PAULETTE GODDARD and SONNY TUFTS because they made a hit together in *So Proudly We Hail* and it was judged expedient to give the simple-hearted movie-goer something that ended happily for both of them. For the rest, this is a work that ostensibly sets out to explore the woman's

problem of Marriage in War-time: Marry a fighting man and worry, or avoid seriously involving your emotions until after the war? The film takes a long time, and a great many hackneyed situations, to reach the conclusion we all knew very well it would reach.

pretends to be a worthless character so that B, "for B's own good," shall deliberately break off their relationship. It is very discouraging to find this latter situation, which I have always found hardly bearable, turning up again. But the simple-hearted fan above alluded to, and the people (mostly women, perhaps) who enjoy working their emotions up to a brisk lather, should like the picture all right.



[*Western Approaches*]

OUTLOOK

Most of the action passes in railway-stations, dance-halls, and boarding-house bedrooms, in a continually recurrent atmosphere of parting. A little freshness is given to parts of the story by the San Francisco background which includes a toiling street-car



[*Summer Storm*]

INLOOK

Judge Petrov GEORGE SANDERS

dashingly driven up a very steep hill by a fruity Irish character played by BARRY FITZGERALD; but this is largely counterbalanced by (among others) two of the oldest fiction clichés known—the rich elderly spinster who loved and lost in her youth, and the staged renunciation scene in which A

murder by his passion for an unscrupulous local beauty; and Russian or not, TCHEHOV or not, it has an unusual power. Strange to find EDWARD EVERETT HORTON as a Russian count; but he turns out somehow to be more Russian than most of the others.

R. M.

With all its disadvantages, *Summer Storm* (Director: DOUGLAS SIRK) is much better: better because less hackneyed, less cliché-ridden. That it is much like anything by TCHEHOV, on whose novel *The Shooting Party* (of which this country seems to have no translation) it is based, I wouldn't say;

but it is a good deal less like the customary reshuffle of well-tried Hollywood devices, and that at any rate is a positive advantage. Probably the chief trouble, the inadequate illusion, is nearly all traceable to the fact that we know the principal

players too well: they trail clouds of Hollywood associations that are death to the idea of pre-revolutionary Russia they are here concerned to establish. Probably many a Russian peasant girl, examining a welcome gift, has let out the Russian equivalent of the cry "Oh, they're beautiful!" . . . but the vistas (down the last fifteen years) of American film heroines who have breathed that precise ejaculation make it exceedingly hard to believe that LINDA DARNELL, when it escapes her lips here, is really a Russian peasant. That is an example of the over-smooth paraphrase; there are also places where the translation is, I imagine, rather too literal—as when GEORGE SANDERS, reflectively narrating past events, says "I see a rainbow, formed by the sun's spectrum."

The story is of a provincial judge (Mr. SANDERS) driven to

Christmas Eve: Mixed Battery

THIS is the golden guerdon. If I quit
The world next day I shall have done my bit.
This is my greatest moment. *This is it!*

This is the coronet; the final brick Upon the edifice; the winning trick. This is my dizziest climacteric.

This is the shining and triumphant page
In my life's annals. Thus do I assuage All fears that I may reach a dull old age

With no rich recollections in my head. To-morrow, as the dawn breaks chilly-red,
I take the A.T.S. their tea in bed.

• •

The Peach-fed Hog

WE were alongside some Americans and our boys got talking with them about national foods, and after we had asked them if gum was a food or an exercise and they had asked us if we had ever tried Antwerp sprouts for a change, one of their chaps produced the remnants of a ham and asked us to sample it. It was very good, too, but when he told us it came from Virginia where they feed the pigs on peaches, some of our more illiterate and distrustful chaps were incredulous.

"Do you mean to say you'd take a wonderful thing like a peach and hand it to a pig?" said Hobson. "Deliberately?"

"Certainly," said the Virginian. "I'd hand him as many tons as he could eat. It improves his flavour, a fact I'm asking you to admit as you devour that ham."

"Peaches don't come by tons," said Hobson, even more shocked than incredulous.

"At home they do," said the Virginian. "If you're eating all the peaches you grow, it just means you're not growing enough, surely. O.K., then, grow some more for the pigs."

"But growing peaches isn't as easy as all that," said Hobson.

"At home it is," said the Virginian. "In this British climate I can see

difficulties, now you mention them. There's a kind of strictness about your weather that might well let the ambition out of a peach, if I may say so."

"Say what you like about our weather," said Gaskell hospitably. "We don't even make the stuff ourselves . . . import it all, you know."

"It's a pity we can't feed the weather on peaches," said Hobson, "to appease it and soften it up and give it a milder flavour. But I wonder, now, what we feed our own pigs on that makes our best ham so expensive? And good, too. Jolly good ham, we used to get . . . at about three shillings a pound, uncooked. I had an uncle who used to feed his pigs iodine once in a while and he got wonderful prices."

"I'd rather be eating secondhand peaches than secondhand iodine," said the Virginian. "I myself had an uncle who tried feedings his pigs some ham once, but he figured he wasn't getting anywhere that way. Not even perpetual motion."

"Maybe it wasn't peach-fed ham," suggested Gaskell.

"It isn't likely my uncle would have any other kind," said the Virginian, "unless maybe it was peach-brandy-fed ham. I must ask him if he's ever tried that."

"I too have had an uncle," said Gaskell, "and he grew very wonderful peaches, right here in England. And do you know what he fed them on? He dug in a big black Bradenham ham around the roots once a year. Ham-fed peaches."

"I bet it wasn't peach-fed ham, though," said the Virginian, "so that

would be no good. If you want ham-fed peaches, you should have peach-fed ham-fed peaches. Say, there might be some peach brandy in this ham, at that . . . this conversation seems pretty well airborne now. Up and away. But that uncle of yours had the right idea, sir. It not only gave the peaches their revenge, which they surely need in any kind of world that's going to be symmetrical. But your uncle asked, as Mr. Hobson here was asking, why we should take a delicate thing like a peach and turn it into pig and then eat it? Why not take a coarse pig and turn him into a peach and eat that? Very sound. After all, what could be more ridiculous than eating ham?"

"Not eating ham," said Gaskell.

"Well, you're not eating any. Have some more."

"And at any rate, what could be more delicate than this ham?"

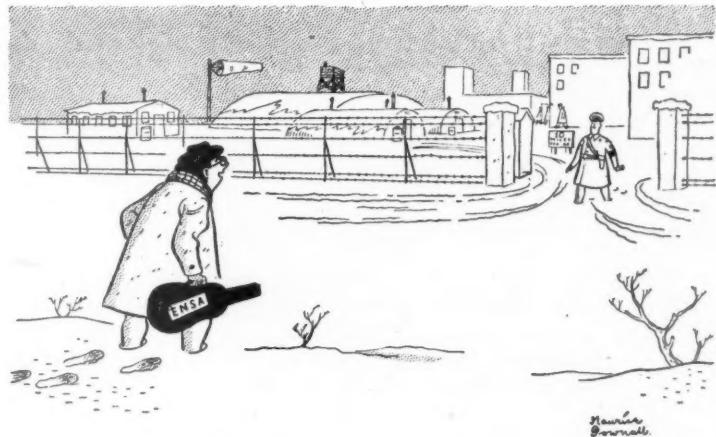
"Your friend Mr. Hobson there. He's more delicate. He still doesn't believe this ham is made of peaches, but he won't say so."

"Oh, I do believe it," said Hobson, much embarrassed.

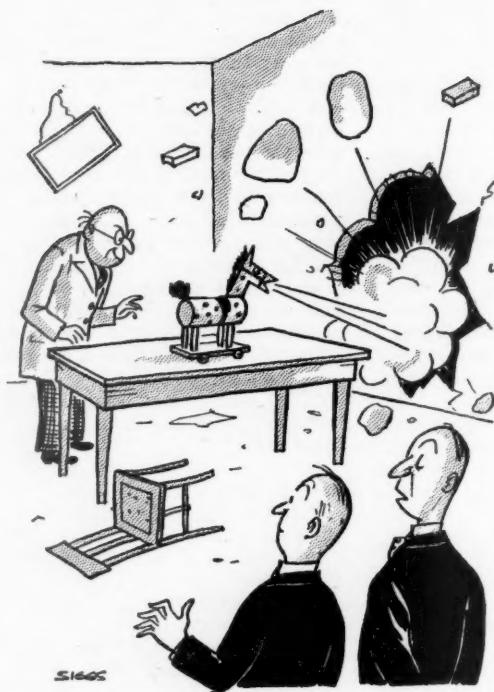
"See? How's that for delicate? Peach-fed courtesy. Well, don't you believe me if you don't want to, Mr. Hobson. And you too, Mr. Gaskell. There's a lot of things I don't believe about you guys, either, so that makes us even."

"What?"

"Well, I don't believe you don't believe as much as you pretend. For one thing, you couldn't . . . there just isn't that much incredulity. You can't kid me either."



"Friend!"



"You can't expect them to change over to peace-time inventions right away, can you now?"

A Plea for Mercy

OH, take those dear old ladies off their bicycles!
I cannot bear to see them any more,
Pedalling slowly, slowly down the Mall,
Beating their way up Knightsbridge and the Gore.

Let those old legs that turn like tired tops
Be stretched out straight in sumptuous motor cars;
And white heads raised to rest on downy pillows,
Which now are bent over the handlebars.

Let them be wrapped in rugs and driven forth
As precious as bright jewels in a casket,
To bring the haddock home in ease and splendour,
Instead of in a little wicker basket.

Oh, dreadful years, that bid our grannies ride
Like aged Amazons unconquered still
On rusty steeds to fight a losing battle
Against the grade of Constitution Hill! V. G.

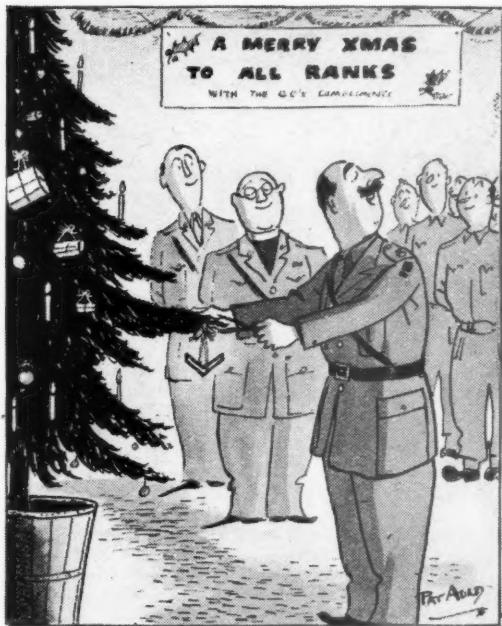
The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this paper should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export.

Spelling

IT would be statistically interesting to find out how many people feel superior to wireless spelling-bees because they know they can spell better, and how many feel the opposite way, which is also superior but only because they are safely out of reach. This is not the sort of thing we are ever likely to know, because then we should know how many good spellers there are and how many bad, and that has always been a problem to sociologists. All they can work out is that there are more good spellers than the good spellers would like to think, though enough bad spellers to make the bad spellers not quite so interesting as the bad spellers hope. Another thing sociologists have worked out is that the wireless revived this form of entertainment because, knowing the effect spelling-bees have always had on even the least human of us, it hoped thus to restore to the public some of that unjustified self-confidence which has been rather knocked about by points and rations and other restrictions. However, this has little to do with the question of spelling except to show that it is very subjective as well as statistical.

Why, we may ask, can some people spell and others not? Well, one theory is that the very good spellers exist to keep a check on the language, while the very bad spellers are there to mess it up the way they would if the very good spellers were not there to keep a check on it. Thus both sides feel useful. This is not a very satisfactory theory because it does not explain why people belong to the side they do, but it is a step in the right direction. Now for some facts about the different grades of spellers in the world. First there are the very good spellers, or those people who can spell everything. Somehow they stand out from their fellows; they carry a mental aura which has accrued from weary years of being asked how to spell words they thought everyone, even the people asking them, knew. They are considered vaguely literary, or likely to have read *Paradise Lost*, but not likely to leave the address off a parcel. They are also likely to have very small writing, perhaps because the extra effort of reading it would make a word spelt wrong an anti-climax. Next we have the people who cannot spell at all. These also are easily distinguishable. They are always stopping in the middle of writing a letter to ask someone else how to spell some word or other. There are two interesting points about this process; one is that the word is never anything but extraordinarily simple, by which I mean spellable by anyone else in the room; the other is that anyone else in the room finds this one word quite fascinating because it is a clue to what the letter is about, and there is nothing more mysterious than what someone else is writing when we are not destined to read it. These people also carry a slight mental aura which, however, is none of their doing but the result of being condescended to every now and then ever since they can remember. They are not considered literary unless they are, when their inability to spell makes them even more so; and on the whole they have kind hearts.

I have said nothing about the stages between spelling everything and spelling nothing at all. This is because, to the public, there is no stage between. You either can or cannot. Nevertheless many of those whom the world takes to be good spellers, that is those who take themselves to be, have faulty patches, notably very long names of flowers. They get round this by not using very long names of flowers when writing letters, except when they have to, when they will laugh it off by explaining that they are now about to write a word they cannot spell; and somehow this



"The next gift is for Private Wickens."

seems, to them, to make them better spellers than ever. Another word which a good speller can seem even better by spelling wrong is "embarrass," over which the world makes such a fuss about it needing two "r's" and not one that good spellers can be bluffed into thinking they would spell it wrong if they spelt it right, and thus fall, as they think, into line with one "r." I mean, this is how they explain things when they find they have been spelling it wrong for years. But over such words really good spellers show their quality in convincing themselves they are wrong and in never slipping up again, or not often. But good-medium spellers, people who are good spellers to themselves and medium spellers to the outside world, have not this power of self-conviction, probably because they do not notice anything wrong. As for bad-medium spellers, these are the people who are bad spellers to the outside world and medium to themselves, except when they want a bit of publicity, so that really they count as just plain bad.

It cannot be denied that the English language is very difficult to spell. I mean, to deny it would take half the fun away from those who manage it; and all the fun from those who do not. Nevertheless it cannot be denied either that dictionaries do spell things all right, so that all bad spellers have to do is look their words up there. But this is where bad spellers fall down. They may look the word up, and tell themselves that all they have to do now is remember. What they do not realize, and what good spellers could have told them all along, is that a word in print in the dictionary has no magic power, and bad spellers, who rely for their kudos on forgetting how words look in print, are going to forget it again right away, just as they did last time. Dictionaries are thus of little use to bad spellers, except at the time. Their main use is to settle disputes, when antagonists will as often as not find that both are right; dictionaries allowing what aggressive

spellers think to be extraordinary latitude by sometimes giving the wrong version of a word as well as the right, or, in certain cases, the right as well as the wrong.

It would be strange if spelling difficulties had not left some visible mark on the world; and so they have, on blotting-paper. Traditional blotting-paper, that is blotting paper which no longer blots, often has all sorts of words written forwards. These are the words letter-writers were not sure of spelling until they tried writing them in different ways, when they found they were no surer even then. Students of human nature may deduce that when two versions of a word occur regularly and alternately on blotting-paper, one right and one wrong, then the writer is not really a bad speller, just human, and had a fifty-fifty chance of choosing the right version. But when three or four versions crop up, some hopeless, then here is a really bad speller at work; unless of course it is some long-named flower, when it is a good speller having a try-out before laughing it off.

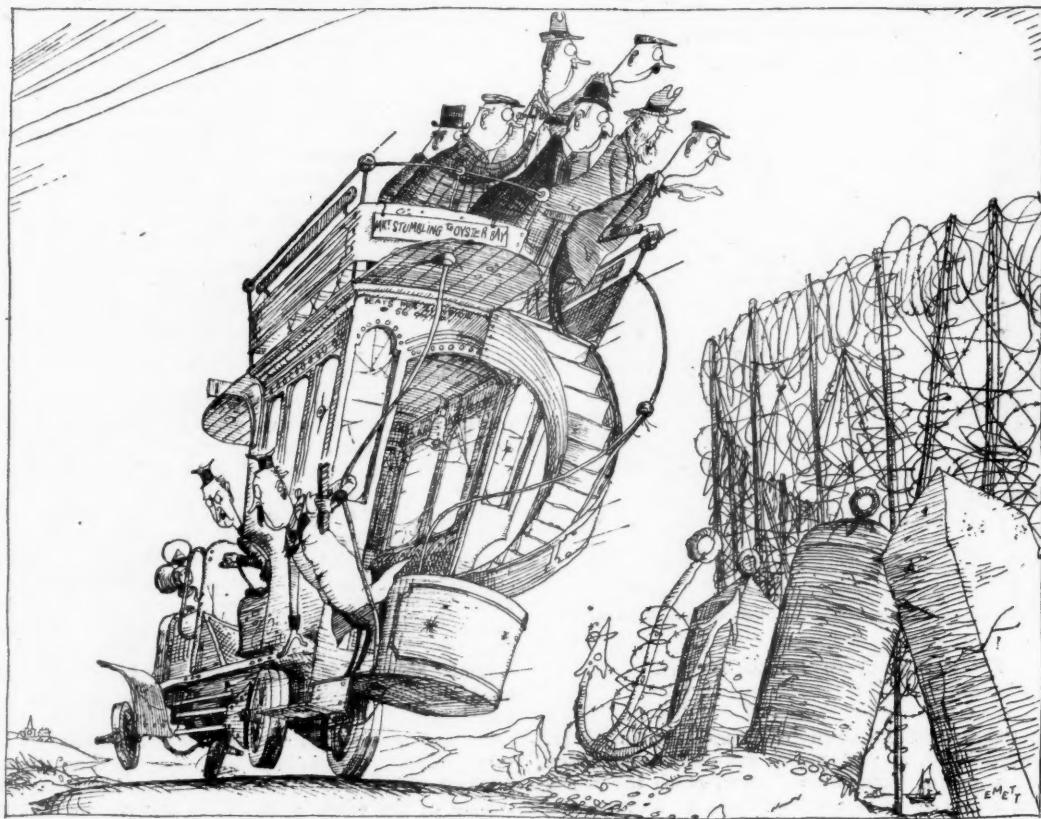
I must say a word about surnames. We can all spell our own surnames, but what even the best spellers among us cannot always do is spell other people's. The trouble is that to most people each kind of surname is spelt one way only, and that is the shape in which it first appeared to them. This seems unreasonable to those who thus get their own names spelt wrong, because naturally to the people a name belongs to theirs is the only possible way of spelling such a name, but it is not a bit unreasonable to those spelling it wrong. There are even people who are influenced by early contact with, say, names not having a final "e." It is instinctive to such people never to put a final "e" to any name unless told to, and perhaps not even then. Psychologists say that the position is a bit hopeless, but that if human nature would cast prejudice aside and assess each surname as encountered at its face value, that is, as having the sort of spelling it seems to warrant, things would be no better; and that, they say, is typical of the whole situation in the spelling world.

○ ○

Oscillation

WHEN Margaret cycles down the village street,
My heart doth fast and ever faster beat
Until its changing frequency is reckoned
In umpteen megacycles to the second. J. B. N.





"I said, the Englishman's traditional love of the sea is going to 'ave serious consequences if you don't coax a few of 'em off the top."

The Eve of Saint Stephen

SAIN'T STEPHEN'S eve!—ah, bitter cold the night!
The roofs lay all a-glitter in the snow;
Within, warm gules, the softly-shaded light
Touch'd the dim berries of the mistletoe,
Where Madeline and gentle Porphyro
In blushing innocence each other greet
Ere to the soft-upholster'd couch they go,
Whereon down-sitting, of the candied sweet
Her extra portion they with aching joy do eat.

The board with damask coverlet o'erspread
Gleam'd festive with its unaccustom'd store
Of meats and fowl that lay engarnishèd
With wintry flowers, and holly berries frore,
Whose season'd presence breath'd remember'd lore
Of other days, and feasts that erst had been;
In crispèd shapes the butter as of yore
Display'd on limnèd plate its yellow sheen,
To which was join'd a weight of pearly margarine.

There precious sugar in a snowy mound
Heap'd high within its crystal prison lay,
And luscious fruits y-pointed eight a pound
Almost Porphyro's wits beguil'd away
From Madeline, that would him hold for aye:
Such juicy comfits did his senses stun,
Who had not relish'd them for many a day—
With nuts and almonds ripen'd in the sun,
Though of the tender fruit of Corinth there was none.

Porphyro gaz'd, and Madeline in haste
Mov'd, that she might that fabl'd feast prepare;
He also, that he might the sooner taste
Those strange, unwonted dainties rich and rare,
Lest by ill-fortune he might lose his share:
What time the Beadsman from his bended knee
Rose, as he finish'd low his vesper prayer,
And eft, with Angela for company,
On glowing gas-ring brew'd his extra ounce of tea.



AU REVOIR

“To our next meeting—in Berlin!”

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, December 12th.—House of Lords: Demobilization is Discussed.

House of Commons: (M)any Complaints!

Wednesday, December 13th.—House of Commons: More About Food.

Thursday, December 14th.—House of Commons: Votes for the Forces.

Tuesday, December 12th.—Back in the dear old days of Long Ago, one of the occasional major luxuries of life was to send for the manager when the steak was not done quite to M'sieu's liking, or the coffee was less than perfect. There was (if you remember) something infinitely emollient and soothing in the profuse apologies of the suave manager, and even more in the steak of superlative succulence or the coffee of unbelievable perfection that was always produced, as if by magic, immediately afterwards.

It came as something of a shock (the pleasant shock of the first taste of restored ice-cream) when the House of Commons suddenly decided to-night to send for The Manager of the "Westminster Palace Hotel" to complain about the food supplied in the dining-rooms of the House. It seemed an infallible indication that the war is ending. It arose on a proposal by Sir JAMES EDMONDSON, for the Government, that the Kitchen Committee should be reappointed, with Mr. BRACEWELL SMITH as Chairman, or Manager.

Mr. BOWLES, the Member for Nun-eaton (which, as someone remarked, seemed a singular place from which so vociferous a critic of food should come), complained about the food and the service and the accommodation and the way the staff was treated. Otherwise, he had no particular criticism to make. But he (as they say across the herring-pond) started something.

Mr. ANEURIN BEVAN (full of beans, as usual, although it was not clear whether they were provided by the Kitchen Committee or some outside caterer, or were spontaneous) fixed Mr. BRACEWELL SMITH with a stern glance and mentioned that all M.P.s were no longer rich. Present income-tax rates, said he, had increased the ranks of the poor among our legislators, but, penurious as they were, they liked their food good and well-cooked and of course cheap. In fact they were poor but they were honest.

He wanted every mod. con. so that he might entertain friends in the Palace of Westminster without having to apologize for the "good-pull-up-for-carmen" atmosphere of its dining-rooms. The food, he said, was awful—but he asked for more.

Lord WINTERTON, who has eaten at the House for forty years, took a kindlier view of the food, and told the waiting Manager (also known to the irreverent as The Minister of the Interior) that it was good and well-cooked. But he wanted better, and said challengingly that he did not mind if some "penny-a-liner" complained that he had said so.

But things, rapped the noble Earl,



FOOD FOR M.P.s

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE KITCHEN COMMITTEE AS SEEN BY LORD WINTERTON

[“Some hon. Members were determined to make a fight against this . . . almost pre-Saxon state of affairs.”—Lord Winterston.]

would be no better so long as five separate authorities had control of the Palace of Westminster: (1) Mr. Speaker (a good and benevolent influence); (2) the Ministry of Works (no comment); (3) the Metropolitan Police (no comment); (4) the Lord Great Chamberlain (no printable comment) and (5) the Serjeant-at-Arms (no comment).

It was all wrong, said Lord WINTERTON, with much of the heat that was allegedly absent from the dishes served in the dining-rooms, that the Lord Great Chamberlain, an irremovable official, not even answerable, in some things, to the Crown, should have all this power. And one day, said the noble Lord darkly, he would put down a humble petition to the KING asking him to do something about it. The

whole set-up reminded him of Buckingham Palace before the Prince Consort cleaned it up.

Mr. GEORGE MUFF, a member of the Kitchen Committee, got so worked up about the complaints that he tied himself up in a macaroni-like tangle of words. He had several goes at "Masochism," untied the knot in his tongue and let it go. Then he had a go at "gastronomic," tripped over a couple of surplus syllables, and dropped that too, like a clumsy waiter (or Mr. RICHARD HEARNE) slipping all over the place with a pile of plates.

Mr. GEORGE BUCHANAN, who has never before been known to take any interest in anything so bourgeois as food in a restaurant, complained that he could not find a place in the House good enough for the entertainment of his Clydeside constituents. He also said that, in an age when democracies were tottering, it was a scandal that it was impossible to get a "potato tea" in the home of the Mother of Parliaments. He rather implied that the future of democracy hung by an omelette.

Mr. BRACEWELL SMITH (evidently not daring to ask what a potato tea might be) threw up a smoke-screen (or mirage) of strawberry teas and "delightful functions" in the dining-rooms—in the piping days of peace—and soothingly created the impression that those times would come again. As proprietor of many of the most famous hotels in London, Mr. BRACEWELL SMITH has the perfect tableside manner, and soon had the House eating out of his hand—at least figuratively.

He gravely reminded the complainants that Mr. R. J. BRADLEY, the popular Catering Manager, and his devoted staff had seen them through thick and thin—through the times when there was neither gas nor water, and tea had to be made from big iron kettles boiled precariously over coal fires; through the times when bombs rained down and fire tore at the vitals of the House; through the times when everything, the whole caboodle, lock, stock and (especially) barrel, had to be moved to Parliament's alternative meeting place—overnight.

Looking a little ashamed, the House dropped its complaints, reappointed the Kitchen Committee *en bloc* and beamed graciously on The Manager as he bowed his way gracefully out, murmuring something about the customer always being right—or something.

After many days' debate, and an



"It's quite an enjoyable book, if you're prepared to skip the chapters describing how the war ended in 1942."

odd crisis or two, the Address of Thanks to the KING for the Speech from the Throne was accorded, unanimously, enthusiastically and without amendment.

Their Lordships heard, in silent wonder, a speech of astonishing fluency, polish and eloquence from Lord READING, just released from five years' service in the Army. His subject was demobilization, and he described himself as "Exhibit A." It was a speech that deeply moved the House, with its mixture of hard-headedness and deep sympathy with the under-dog, and Lord WINSTER drew a roar of cheers when he said that the debate had been worth while even if its only result was to draw forth so perfect a piece of constructive eloquence. Lord WINSTER's own effort was no mean one, either, and, even if the Government's reply, delivered by Lord WOOLTON, added little to the sum of human knowledge (or at any rate to the knowledge of those who have read the White Papers on the subject), everybody went home happy and contented. Even Lord NATHAN, who had moved a motion criticizing the Government,

smiled and bowed—and decided to withdraw it.

Wednesday, December 13th. — Mr. "CHIPS" CHANNON, with a proper regard for security and all that, asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether he would now give a favourable reply to the appeal of "a certain town council of whose name he has been informed, for the release of their pier." Everybody fell to guessing which of the many piers on Britain's coast could so interest the honourable Member for Southend-on-Sea—but of course they drew blank.

Pursuing the mystery-thriller vein, Mr. MCKINLAY asked a question about "the firm of Smith Brothers, of Glasgow," which he wanted removed from the Ministry of Food's list of authorized meat traders. Colonel LLEWELLIN, the Minister, correctly replied that, as there was no such firm, "the second part of the question therefore did not arise." A few moments later the gallant Colonel put the cat among the—turkeys—by announcing that the import of turkeys from Ireland would not be allowed this merry Yuletide. His tender heart

melted when he saw the dismay this occasioned, and he mentioned that "genuine gifts" would readily be licensed and could come over.

After this, it was a simple thing for him to defend himself against a charge made by another Member that he was issuing "lumps of fat masquerading as bacon." The House just shouted his heckler down.

Lady ASTOR, whose decision to retire at the coming election has saddened a House that greatly esteemed her forthrightness and reforming zeal, demanded that what spare grain there was should go into cows (*en route* to the milk bottle) rather than into beer. Colonel LLEWELLIN said there was enough for both purposes—an answer that did not please Lady A. to any appreciable extent.

Thursday, December 14th. — Mr. HERBERT MORRISON, the Home Secretary, announced that plans are to be made for our Forces overseas to vote by post in the coming election. This gave general satisfaction, for Members feel that the men and women who have made an election possible should be able to play their part in it.



"The usual guff about Sub-Section 253, Allocation of Raw Materials Order, Board of Trade . . ."

Not So Silly

A Child's Guide to Parliament

I

ONE day, Rich-ard and Iv-y, when ult-im-ate vict-or-y comes and the Germ-ans are beat-en, there will be a Gen-er-al E-lec-tion, and the e-lec-tors (or vot-ers) will have to choose a new Parl-ia-ment—or rath-er, a new House of Comm-ons. By that time, at the pres-ent ve-loc-it-y of ult-im-ate vict-or-y, you will have a vote your-selves. So I am go-ing to tell you some things a-bout Parl-ia-ment.

I do not won-der, chil-dren, that there is al-read-y a vac-ant and a

wear-y look up-on your litt-le fac-es. Per-haps you read the pap-ers some-times, though I know that you spend most of your spare time at the pict-u-res or list-en-ing to class-i-cal music turn-ed in-to dance - tunes by clev-er Am-er-i-can com-pos-ers. If you do read the pap-ers you will have seen the word Parl-ia-ment be-fore: and you will won-der why your good Uncle Hadd-ock should both-er to tell you ab-out Parl-ia-ment. For when you see Parl-ia-ment spok-en of in the pap-ers, you can be fairly

sure that it will be spok-en of in a prett-y in-sult-ing way: and if you still think that Parl-ia-ment is a sub-ject worth-y of your att-en-tion in a world so de-light-full-y full of air-craft, film-stars, and dance - band lead-ers I am high-ly sur-pris-ed.

For ex-ample, Rich-ard, you will have read in the pap-ers, or heard at the dog - rac-es that Parl-ia-ment is a mere "talk-ing - shop," that "all they do there is to talk", and things like that. It is ver-y funn-y that these things should be said, for the word Parl-ia-ment comes from the French word *parler*, mean-ing "to talk" and that is what Parl-ia-ment is for—*talk-ing*. The Eng-lish, long a-go, made up their minds that it was bett-er to de-cide things by *talk-ing* than by cutt-ing off peop-le's heads; which was the old way. Now al-so we think it is bett-er to de-cide things by *talk-ing* than by putt-ing peop-le in pris-ons and whipp-ing them or pull-ing out their fing-er-nails, which is the Germ-an way. So, you see it is not ver-y sens-i-ble to laugh at Parl-ia-ment because it is a talk-ing place. In-deed, it is oft-en com-plained that some Mem-bers do not talk at all or do not talk en-ough. These Mem-bers are said to be neg-lect-ing their dut-ies. So you see how hard it is to give com-plete sat-is-fact-ion in this world. And what would be said if Parl-ia-ment be-gan to *do* things, *with-out* talk-ing, I shudd-er to think. There would be a rev-o-lut-ion at once.

So you must laugh in a know-ing mann-er when you hear these things said. And you will laugh still more when I re-mind you that we are fight-ing for free-dom, which in-cludes free speech and free Parl-ia-ments. So you would ex-pect to hear, from time to time, a kind-ly ref-er-ence to our own free Parl-ia-ment and its Mem-bers.

But no. As you may have learn-ed, Mem-bers of Parl-ia-ment are known as "pol-it-ic-i-ans": and pol-it-ic-i-ans, with the poss-i-ble ex-cept-ion of jour-nal-ists, are the low-est form of ser-pent life. One day your poor Uncle Hadd-ock was a well-resp ect-ed cit-iz-en. The next day he wase-lect-ed, or chos-en by the peop-le, to be a Mem-ber of Parl-ia-ment and became a des-pis-ed pol-it-ic-i-an, not much bett-er than a bad oys-ter. It is hard to say why the pol-it-ic-i-an should stand so low on the list of worth-y call-ings. For pol-it-ics, Iv-y, is the whole bus-i-ness of the gov-ern-ment and bett-er-ment of man; and an-y-one who gives his time to such aff-air-s should sure-ly be for-giv-en, if not res-pect-ed, es-pe-cial-ly if by so do-ing he has less

time to make mon-ey for him-self. And that, be-lieve it or not, Rich-ard, is the case of most pol-it-i-cians. Ver-y few get an-y-thing out of it. Ver-y man-y put all they can in-to it.

Well, I mean, there are sev-en hun-dred mem-bers of the House of Lords, and six hun-dred mem-bers of the House of Comm-ons. But how man-y plac-es are there in the Gov-ern-ment? I for-get. But I sup-pose the odds a-gain-st your Un-cle Hadd-ock get-ting in-to the Cab-in-et, with five thou-sand a year (which, by the way, he would much dis-like) are prett-y heav-y. It is true that ev-er-y Mem-ber of the House of Comm-ons now re-ceives six hun-dred pounds a year. But what is that? In these days, as you know, ev-en free of in-come-tax, that will not fetch much more than two small gins and a hair-cut.

If you have att-end-ed care-full-y so far, which I slight-ly doubt, Rich-ard, you will un-der-stand how deep-ly sur-prised and wound-ed are these pub-lic-spir-it-ed and self-sacr-if-i-cing men to find them-selves the ob-ject of cos-mic ob-loq-uy. What is cos-mic ob-loq-uy? Well, Iv-y, I must use some long words now and then, to keep you a-wake; and they mean un-i-vers-al un-kind-ness. But so it is. If a Mem-ber makes man-y speech-es he is said to be al-ways talk-ing, eag-er for pub-lic-it-y or off-ice. If he sits qui-et and supp-orts the King's Gov-ern-ment, he is said to be a Yes-man, eag-er for off-ice or a peer-age.

If he gives all his time to pol-it-i-cies he is call-ed a "pro-fess-ion-al" polit-i-cian, which, for some reas-on, is a dis-grace-ful thing to be. If, how-ev-er, he has oth-er int-er-ests and occ-u-pa-tions, he is a mere dabb-ler, who does not take the thing ser-i-ous-ly; and that is worse.

If he spends all his time at West-min-ster the peop-le say "You should come to the coun-tr-y and hear what we think." But if he spends much time in the coun-tr-y he is told that he is an ab-sent-ee and ought to be in his place at West-min-ster.

If the Mem-bers make sol-emn speech-es they are dull; if they make a-mus-ing speech-es they are friv-o-lous.

If there are long de-bates the peop-le say "Why don't you do some-thing?" But when the Mem-bers do some-thing and pro-duce an Act of Parl-i-a-ment there is near-ly al-ways a nat-ion-al out-cry.

The pres-ent Parl-i-a-ment, Rich-ard, en-joys al-most per-man-ent a-buse. It has last-ed, you see, for nine years (which is four years long-er than us-u-al), and it is said to be the same

old jad-ed bod-y of in-com-pet-ent and fool-ish men that the peop-le in their wis-dom el ect-ed in 1935. As a matt-er of fact, since that year, no few-er than two hun-dred and eight new Mem-bers have come in, so at least one-third of it is fair-ly fresh. Then it is said that it was el ect-ed in diff-er-ent cir-cum-stanc-es and has no real right to op-en its mouth a-bout an-y-thing to-day. Well, it was el ect-ed to deal with dict-at-ors when the Top Wop, the first of them, was rag-ing fur-i-ous-ly. It has dealt with him, and it is deal-ing, more and more suc-cess-fully, with the oth-ers. "So," as you are fond of say-ing, "what?"

Rich-ard, I wish that you would stop chew-ing. And the funn-y thing is this. On the one hand, this Parl-i-a-ment is said to be ag-ed, jad-ed, incap-a-ble, un-rep-re-sent-a-tive, lack-ing an-y re-al auth-or-it-y or man-date, a worth-less bag of bones. On the oth-er hand, it is said, by the same peop-le, that be-fore this sen-ile and weak-ly bod-y comes to an end it should and must make far - reach-ing plans for the fut-ure not on-ly of this coun-tr-y but the en-tire planet, and pass a num-ber of do-mest-ic laws which will rad-ic-all-y change the lives of ev-er-y-bod-y, though, by the

way, a-bout these plans the peop-le have nev-er been con-sult-ed, and it might be said that Parl-i-a-ment had no real auth-or-it-y or man-date.

So that is funny too. Nev-er-the-less, the soon-er there is a Gen-er-al E-lect-ion the bett-er: and it will serve some peop-le right if they win it.

Well, chil-dren, it is for that great day that I wish to pre-pare you. I wish to show you that it is not all so sill-y as it seems. And in the next lect-ure we will get go-ing. That is, of course, if you have done your foot-ball pools in time. A. P. H.

Responsibility

"Barmaid, experienced and responsible for North Berwick."—Advt. in Scottish paper.

"Thousands of people at Mirfield, in the Spen Valley district of Yorkshire, watched a lunar rainbow, which lasted for six minutes, on Friday night. The rainbow formed a largo semi-circle stretching right across the valley. The moon was exceptionally bright and rain was falling. Aristotle claimed to be the first observer of the phenomenon."—Liverpool Daily Post.

Like his cheek—not even a Yorkshire-man!



"I'm afraid it's going to be very difficult to stop people using your pony, Mr. Shanks."

At the Play

"ANOTHER LOVE-STORY" (PHÆNIX)

MR. FREDERICK LONSDALE, we assume, set out to discuss the second (and wryly twisted) love-affair of *Michael Fox* and the revengeful *Diana Flynn*, parts played by Mr. ANTON WALBROOK and Miss JUDY CAMPBELL. He is a rolling stone in search of moss. She is a dangerous gleam from his past. They meet for another, and less romantic, love-story in a wealthy house on Long Island—and there, to our alarm, Mr. LONSDALE quickly tires of them. Even Mr. WALBROOK, who can be a dominating actor, is baffled by the early scenes of bantering, the later passage of sentiment (with a Spanish melody to reinforce it) and the night's crucial episode in a bedroom distinguished only for its wallpaper.

Apparently, Mr. LONSDALE, wearying of the principals, lost his heart to a minor character, one *George Wayne*, banker by profession, amorist by nature, and now performed—as wittily as the part will let him—by Mr. ROLAND CULVER. *George* is melancholy's child. His words are syllables of dolour, every thought is torturing, and his slumbers are as racked as Richard's on the eve of Bosworth. The reason? Simply that the immoderate fellow has become engaged to both the predatory *Celia* and to his secretary *Maggie*. They fight for him throughout the evening like the contenders over Tarquin's body. His woes usher in the play and see it out, and the nearer Mr. CULVER gets to tears the better company he is. Mr. LONSDALE, we feel, has cherished *George*, and he seems also to have had a fleeting affection for the English butler *Mortimer* (Mr. MICHAEL SHEPLEY), whose heart is in the cellar and whose dignity is apt to waver after sunset. There remain the nicely-calculated comedy of Mr. A. E. MATTHEWS, who can turn lead into thistledown, and the direct attack of Miss ROSALYN BOULTER's *Maggie*. These pleasures aside, the evening is unexpectedly dim. Miss ZENA DARE has for once only the glimmer of a part as the hostess with two husbands—present and past—in residence simultaneously.

The play never approaches *Mrs. Cheyney* or *The High Road*, but it can be put upon record that Mr. LONSDALE is loyal to his artificial comedy, his old formula and idiom. The amorous entanglements are in the tradition, the witticisms and near-misses are as plentiful as ever, and none need be troubled by the move to Long Island. (Nobody at the Phoenix attempts to

be American.) At the last the conviction remains: it is a pity that the dramatist did not reconstruct his love-story around Mr. CULVER. *George*, as this actor plays him, deserves a Lonsdale Belt. J. C. T.

"PYGMALION"

(LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH)

For various reasons both *Nina Jesson* and *Eliza Doolittle* were allergic to parks. SHAW's heroine expressed herself rather more forcibly than Pinero's. In fact she took such a strong line about the walk with *Freddy* that her exit, bloody but unbowed, from *Mrs. Higgins's* tea-party was the high explosive of 1913 and its echoes are still sounding in 1944.

It is much to Miss ELLEN POLLOCK's credit that she does not fog the first part of the notorious tea-party by racing towards *Eliza's* shocking adjective. Far from it. Her *Eliza-Galatea*, on an official test in a world bristling with aspirates, makes a stately progress down a Long Walk of polite chit-chat—passing from the weather ("There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation") to the medicinal properties of gin ("Gin was mother's milk to her"). Now her voice attains a swelling contralto; now it comes to us like the hooting of a distant tug on the river; now it mimics a ring-dove's *roucoulement*. The scene is a lovely vocal exercise, and Miss POLLOCK—though less correct when *Eliza* warbles her native wood-notes wild in laboratory and street—makes one anxious to hear her matched against that other wandering voice, Mr. SID FIELD. The actress finds the right mood for the rebel of the last acts; but *Eliza* in command of her vowels, and with her breathing sternly ordered, can never be so endearing as *Miss Doolittle* in travail with the new small-talk and fluting gravely: "My aunt died of influenza, so they said. But it's my belief they done the old woman in."

Mr. MICHAEL GOLDEN, an actor of increasing quality, offers in his boorishness and charm a recognizable likeness of *Higgins* of Wimpole Street to whom the Tower of Babel would have been merely a happy adventure in phonetics. But the *Doolittles* make the play. *Eliza's* father *Alfred*, the golden dustman, one of the undeserving poor who runs up against middle-class morality and ends as a middle-man himself, is vintage Shaw; Mr. RICHARD GOOLDEN now treats him with a connoisseur's respect. The best of the lesser characters are the understanding mother who presents no problems to Mis-

MARGARET HALSTAN, and the Wimpole Street housekeeper, *Mrs. Pearce*, endowed by Miss JOAN CRAFT with the crispness of the better brands of toast. There should be a welcome also for Miss ELAINE INESCORT, who returns to the London stage as that scandalized mamma, *Mrs. Eynsford Hill*.

J. C. T.
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Livestock

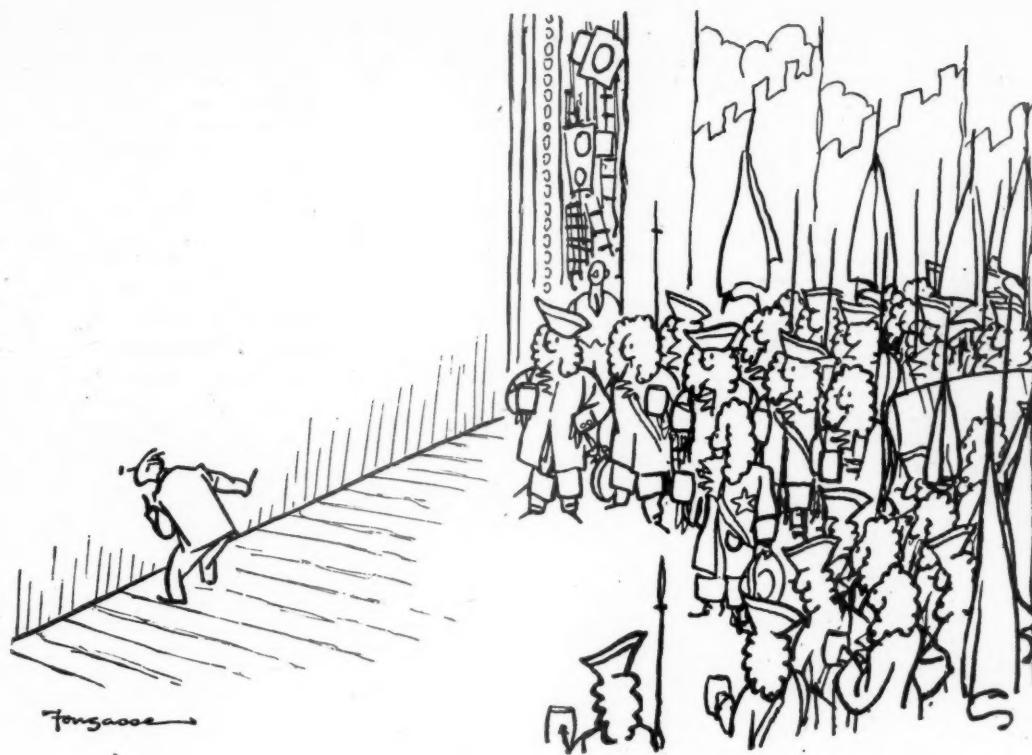
"OUR next stop is 2993 Company," said Captain Sympson, as we packed our Welfare supplies into our truck. "Major Tupper is in charge of the Company, and his weakness is animals. Apart from this one streak of gentleness in his nature he is reputed to be rather a tough egg."

Each time that we move on to a new Company Sympson goes to endless trouble to find out all he can about the Company Commander so as not to put his foot in it at dinner on the first evening. Dinner the first evening, he reckons, determines the success or failure of his attempt to inflict a maximum of Welfare during the rest of his stay. He has a stock of five fairly funny stories: one about an Irishman, one about a Regular soldier, one about an American, one about a Jew, and one about an Eskimo. At the first few Companies we visited he had a run of bad luck. In one Company there was a Regular soldier and a Jew, and when he came out with his stories they laughed in the high-pitched way people do when they think they are insulted by a guest. At the next Company there was an American and an Irishman, and this run of bad luck so shook Sympson that at the third Company he just told the story about the Eskimo, thinking it unlikely that there would be any Eskimos present, only to find that there was a padre at the table who had been a missionary for forty years in wherever Eskimos come from, and who shot at Sympson one of the coldest looks he had ever received.

"If Major Tupper is such a tough egg," I said weakly, "can't we just leave him out? I don't think it is any use forcing Welfare down the throats of these people who have no natural taste for it."

"We can't neglect our duty," said Sympson. "We must make Major Tupper Welfare-conscious at any cost or inconvenience to ourselves, or even to him. By using a little elementary psychology we shall have him eating out of our hands."

I said that I could not see any



"No, no—not yet: there are still a couple of teas going on in the middle of row G."

connection between elementary psychology and Major Tupper's fondness for animals.

"I shall convince him that I too am fond of animals," said Sympson. "When I get out of the truck, followed by a cat and five kittens and a dog, it will persuade him, more than any mere words could do, that I am an enthusiastic lover of animals. A bond will be formed between us, and I shall have his full support in my campaign for better and brighter Welfare in his Company."

I asked him where he proposed to steal the cat and kittens and dog.

"I have already obtained the cat and kittens," he said, "from the Company we have just left. They were the pets of the second-in-command, but the Major let me bring them away as they have just had a quarrel over the Transport Return. I mean the Major and Captain Baggs of course, not the cat and kittens. The dog I hope to collect at 2996 Company, which we pass on our way to 2993. I remember that the 2996 Major complained about the number of stray dogs round the

camp last time we were there, so I wired to him this morning to have one or two ready for us to collect when we drop in there for lunch."

Major Gadds of 2996 Company proved to be a man of large views. Sympson had asked him for one or two dogs, and he had rounded up seven. He said that after he had seen the results of Sympson's welfare on his Company he had wanted to be in a position to make Sympson some sort of a return, and so he had put every spare man he could muster on the job of collecting dogs.

Luckily three of them escaped while being loaded on the truck, but the other four made a terrific noise for the next fifty miles, evidently scenting the cats in the large closed crate. We stopped for tea at a small village, and I only just managed to prevent Sympson from buying a baby camel.

Major Tupper himself was out when we arrived, but we were met by Lieutenant Gudge, who was acting second-in-command. The real second-in-command, Lieutenant Gudge explained, had just been returned

ignominiously to Base Depot because at a recent concert he had done an imitation of a dog-fight, and this had led to high words with Major Tupper.

"Yes," said Lieutenant Gudge, "it's only fair to warn you that animals of any sort are the Major's weakness. He can't stand them at any price."

Christmas 1944

THE Christmas of this passing year, My wireless says, will bring good cheer.

It lists the sumptuous fare, and so With jubilants I jubilo.
Eight penn'orth of incipient leather For eager guests to chew together:
One orange to make marmalade:
One egg, if any eggs are laid:
Perhaps some peanuts, or, if Fate Be more than generous, a date:
And, if you're very old like me, Laus Domino! one ounce of tea.
So let's be gay, if no one else is,
And all sing *Gloria in excelsis*.

G. F. B.



"I shall be away three days. You know the policy of this shop—don't sell anything."

Our Booking-Office (By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Mankind and Mr. Lewis Mumford

The Condition of Man (SECKER AND WARBURG, 25/-) is the third of four volumes in a series designed by its author, Mr. LEWIS MUMFORD, an American historian and philosopher, to give a comprehensive view of the past and to indicate what course humanity must follow if it desires a happier future. The present volume covers the history of Western man from the birth of Christianity to the present day. Mr. MUMFORD combines immense erudition with great skill in the art of unrolling an historico-philosophical panorama, dotted with stimulating generalizations. Some idea of this book may be conveyed by recording that it opens with a sketch of Hellenic and Roman civilization, summarizes the teaching of Jesus, outlines the growth of the Papacy, explains the mediaeval synthesis, defines the limitations of scholastic philosophy, traces the interrelation of Capitalism and Protestantism and the displacement of Romanticism by Utilitarianism, and ends on the modern collapse into barbarism, with an epilogue suggesting a "basis of renewal." It is a dazzling achievement, for Mr. MUMFORD is as lively as he is learned, a rare combination. Unfortunately his desire to pigeon-hole everything prevents him from extracting its essence from anything. Little, for example, is left of the power in the original sayings after Mr. MUMFORD has condensed Christ's teaching into—"When Jesus's transpositions were finished all the negative elements in life were on the positive side of the equation and had changed their sign." Again, Mr. MUMFORD has reproduced many of the great paintings of the last four hundred years, but always merely to drive home some

political or sociological point he is making. Breughel's *The Fall of Icarus*, an enigmatic as well as a very beautiful picture, holds no mysteries for Mr. MUMFORD—"All that remains of classical allusion is the famous inventor's leg—which Breughel is pulling. The true subject of this landscape is Soil and Sea, Home and Adventure"—a kind of poster, in fact: "Join the Army and See the World." In the same spirit he converts Turner's *Calais Pier* into revolutionary propaganda—"Here the insurgent vitalities of the period are as plainly expressed as in Delacroix's noble painting of Liberty Leading the People." It is curious that the one piece of knowledge which persons who take all knowledge for their province never acquire is that knowledge and wisdom are not interchangeable terms.

H. K.

Barges at Boulogne

There is a diffident honesty about *Years of Victory, 1802-1812* (COLLINS, 12/6), which, underlying Mr. ARTHUR BRYANT's brilliantly pursued object of elucidating this war in terms of its closest historical parallel, exhibits, one feels, more poise, more far-sightedness, and in the end more patriotism than the whole-hearted identification of John Bull with St. George and Napoleon with the Dragon. "The French people," said a gallant captain of the Peninsular War, "seem to have traced back every step that nations make towards civilization." "Her wings," wrote Lord Paget, "must be clipped close. Pray stick to that for ever." Even the word "Hun" was mentioned. As regards ourselves, there was appeasement, a belated digging in of heels, a war-effort that riveted a hideous industrialism and a new pattern of domestic tyranny on Castlereagh's England, and an enmity towards Boney's Empire which, coupled with the extension of our own, struck Wilberforce as illogical. Yet here, once again, are the feats of sea-power and the same old misunderstood land campaigns to prolong the enemy's lines to exhaustion point. "Believe me, I shall never take off my hat for anything less than a British seaman," said a spectator at Martinique; and the nation that did not celebrate but mourned Trafalgar had its own share of magnanimity.

H. P. E.

The Unfortunate Country

In Poland for many generations all other impulses have been dominated to an overwhelming degree by the perpetual upthrust towards national independence. Professor W. J. ROSE, though he is honestly trying in *The Rise of Polish Democracy* (BELL, 10/-) to describe how popular institutions began to emerge in a society long dominated by a rather self-centred aristocracy, finds himself inescapably drawn back, time after time, to comment on the larger struggle for free nationalism. Mainly he is telling how a great nation cut clean in three parts, each separately oppressed, kept its soul alive in the half-smothered language of the countryside and a little forbidden literature circulated by stealth, and it is only in the final chapters, where he has hopeful things to say of education and co-operation in the period between the wars, that he really comes near his ostensible thesis. It is his sorrow that he can say little about Polish aptitude for the forms of Parliamentary government. He does not carry the story beyond the renewal of the tragedy in 1939, and throughout his book he loses something in intelligibility by giving us undeserved credit for familiarity with rather more than the outlines of Polish history. He has no help for us in the pronunciation of names that to him are nobly musical but to most of us a stumbling-block still to be overcome.

C. C. P.

Et Altera "Argo"

To those of us who regard the Voyage of the Argonauts as another *Hunting of the Snark*—and, thanks to the decorous labours of Kingsley, Hawthorne and William Morris, a very much duller one, Mr. ROBERT GRAVES's historical novel *The Golden Fleece* (CASSELL, 12/6) will come as an entertaining surprise. Mr. GRAVES takes the legend to be fact, considerably falsified by a too literal interpretation of the pictographs which first embalmed it. (Centaurs, for instance, were not horse-plus-man, but a fraternity under a horse-incarnated daemon.) He copes with the vital problem of the narrator's standpoint by assuming the critical outlook and limber style of a story-teller of 146 B.C.—a time when the *Argo*'s stern was still on show in Corinth. Thus stabilized, he dispatches his heroes to Colchis through a Mediterranean world dominated by adherents of the Sun-god or the Moon-Goddess, patriarchal or matriarchal tribes pitting their wits, their weapons and their magic against each other and for and against the Argonauts. His story, crowned by the meeting and parting of Jason and Medea, gains steadily in beauty, vigour and buoyancy; and comic relief is provided not only by Hercules and Hylas but by the supernatural pretensions and human foibles of other acquaintances, old and new.

H. P. E.

Portrait of a Zoologist

This biography (*Squire—Memories of Charles Davies Sherborn*, by J. R. NORMAN. HARRAF, 15/-) presents an uncommon number of obstacles to the reader. Its jacket contains nothing either about Charles Davies Sherborn or Mr. J. R. NORMAN; the preface assumes the reader's acquaintance with Sherborn's name and work, and the book itself does not trace Sherborn's life from birth to death in the convenient if humdrum way of most biographies, but treats his various interests in separate chapters and with a good deal of superfluous detail. If, however, the reader perseveres, he will get his bearings after a while, and find by the end that he has been made acquainted with a gifted and very likeable eccentric. Charles Davies Sherborn spent most of his life on the staff of the Natural History Museum, Kensington, was a distinguished zoologist who compiled an Index Animalium in 8,154 pages, never married, and died in 1942 at the age of eighty. It would have been easy to give a sentimental picture of a crusty old bachelor with a heart of gold, but there is a dogged honesty about Mr. NORMAN which makes Sherborn very real to the reader. His "somewhat heavy sense of humour," his "incurable tendency to learn only one side of the subject—and that his own," his bouts of omniscience, are all noted and illustrated by his biographer, and these flaws and foibles throw into relief the more attractive traits in Sherborn's character, his practical sympathy when anyone was ill, his freedom from political and religious claptrap, his simplicity and his uncompromising individualism.

H. K.

Thirty Days' War

"It is not an everyday experience for a Parliamentarian to find himself being carried blindfold at dawn into the city of the Caliphs, there to have the bandages stripped from his eyes and to see, across the fast waters of the Tigris, the domes and minarets of this fabled city which is associated with the memory of Haroun Al Raschid." That is how Captain SOMERSET DE CHAIR told the House of Commons about the march from the Mediterranean to the Tigris to capture Bagdad. His adventures as Intelligence Officer in the Flying Column, Kingcol, commanded by Brigadier J. J. Kingstone, D.S.O., his dealings with

the legendary Major Glubb and his "Girls" (so-called because of their flowing robes), details of the "Thirty Days' War" and the events that followed after are now given to us in a book, *The Golden Carpet* (FABER, 15/-), which suggests in title and spirit Flecker's poem about another golden journey. The author was described by Brigadier Kingstone as "the most extraordinary fellow who knows nothing about his job but keeps on producing rabbits out of a hat" . . . "And," says the author, "perhaps that is the only way wars are won." This one, as we know already, saved Iraq from German domination, and now we are told the ghastly small details and the weary though romantic journeying that brought it to pass. Captain DE CHAIR writes magnificently and does not neglect either humour or beauty. His book is divided into three parts, "The Golden Journey," "The Silver Crescent" (both of which have been published before in expensive and limited editions) and a commentary by Glubb Pasha, written in response to the author's request for stimulating criticism, in which he writes, "I do not want anything said about myself, but I feel very strongly that you have not done justice to the men of the Arab Legion." That may be so; but the present book provides us with a captivating foretaste of other great stories to come.

B. E. B.



"PLEASE, Mr. Bramston—not here."



"I can't speak too highly of to-day's Special, sir. It's all we've got left."

News from Bengers

Bengers, Herts, 1944

MY DEAR, DEAR READERS,—I have been so infinitely touched by the many letters I have received from unknown friends all over the world, asking for more news of myself and my nearest and dearest, that the Editor has been extremely kind and allowed space for me to send my beloved public this little bulletin from the Bengers Front—for a Front it is and has always been, I am proud to say, and never more than at this moment, when Addle, with all the fire and ferocity of a Highlander (he was not called Hottie McClutch at his crammer's for nothing), is making his autumn assault on the thistles in the Long Meadow. "I only wish they were Huns," he says—he has not yet picked up the more modern word of "Nazi"—as he slashes at each one fiercely. That is the spirit, I am

convinced, that makes us British worthy of the flag that flutters from Bengers' roof.

My dear evacuees are all well, though a little off colour perhaps now that there are not so many flying-bomb stories to interest them. Crumpet, our dear old butler, is dead.

It was all so very sad. He got a chill, with these piercing winds we have had lately, and retired to bed. Although my staff usually cook for themselves, I felt I couldn't permit this for such an old and valued servant as Crumpet, so insisted on taking over his cooking myself, and sent him up the daintiest and most tempting meals I could concoct. Every tray came down untouched, however, until I was in despair. At last I bethought me that a good beef jelly might tempt him. But how to achieve it? Our stock of gelatine is exhausted, and it is, I know,

unobtainable. (That is where I miss Mipsie so much. She could always get everything. But she of course is another war casualty, having—as my dear readers know—suffered for her convictions by going to prison for black market dealings.) Suddenly I had a brain wave, and remembered I had some old transparent wrappings. To my joy, they dissolved—not quite like gelatine, it is true, but well enough, when added to good beef stock, to make it set in a very convincing jelly, and I was rewarded by seeing, when Crumpet's tray came down, that nearly a quarter of it had gone. Next morning, however, the poor old man was much worse—the doctor said he could almost see through him—and in spite of all we could do he died two days later. His last words, whispered to the housemaid, showed his wonderful devotion to us.

"His Lordship's port," he said weakly. "See that it's decanted slowly." His death was a real grief to us, besides being a shock, for he was only eighty-one.

Nothing but good news comes, I rejoice to say, from my dear Margaret, who has just spent a week's leave with her husband in Stornoway, where he is stationed. Here she has had, besides the happiness of being with Paul, what is so dear to a young girl's heart, a real personal success, and has, she says, been warmly welcomed and thoroughly spoilt by the officers' mess. No other wives are up there, nor any Ats, Wrens, or Waafs, and the residents, apparently, are very scattered. I don't know why I never thought of Stornoway before.

Only one thing in her letter gave me a twinge of anxiety, which was that they had heard of some wonderful new oculist, just released from 18B, whom they were hoping to consult, next time they came south, about Paul's eyesight. I wrote back at once strongly advising against such a course. Not that I have any reason to doubt the competence of the oculist. Ever since a certain Dr. Schmützig cured dear Greasie Gasket (Lady Grace Gasket) of biting her husband, which every doctor in England had put down to nerves, by proving that the whole thing was due to a small dislocated bone in her elbow, I have had great faith in foreign doctors. But many of them, after all, are our enemies, and anyway, as regards Paul's eyes it is far better, as I told Margaret, to leave well alone. They are very happy as they are.

And now I know that my readers will be longing to have news of my dear Mipsie, at present in — Gaol (it is better not to mention the name as the prison authorities do not encourage press photographers). It will be bitter news to them to hear that she was given twelve months, the almost inhuman judge (how wrongly called Mr. "Justice") having declared that he was making her sentence a hard one as a warning to others "like her." As if there was anyone in the world like Mipsie!

However, with all the pluck and pride of a Coot she is bravely facing her sentence—and of course as usual she has won all hearts. The Governor has frequently been to see her and, as a special concession, allowed her to teach her wardress six-pack bezique; the chaplain has lent her his hot-water bottle, even the warders bring her humble little sprays of orchid to show their sympathy and affection. Nevertheless she is lonely and homesick for

news of the outside world. Tears came into her eyes when I was visiting her last week at the mention of the Rivoli Bar at the Ritz. "Tell me how they are all looking," she said wistfully.

So I have conceived—and the Governor has kindly consented to—a plan to relieve the monotony of her existence. She will write her life-story, in short notes, and I will enlarge these into a finished product which will appear in these pages after Christmas under the title of "The Memoirs of Mipsie." This, I know, will be good tidings to many of my correspondents.

Not quite all my letters were flattering by the way. One, indeed, with an Irish postmark, signed only "Widowed Countess," said that the writer had "never read so much piffle in her life." I cannot think who it can be, as I know the handwriting of all the widowed Irish countesses, so I can only conclude it must be a visiting foreign title, which does not of course count, though they are, no doubt, very well in their way. M. D.

• • •

Animals in the Office

JUST what we expected! After dithering about for weeks Mr. Head took us by surprise one morning and came in saying he was going to Falmouth the next day and I'd better have my second week too as soon as I could.

So next day he brought his little dog up with him out of his wife's way

till he met her at the station, and of course it got into everybody's way and every time the telephone went it barked at it till you couldn't hear yourself think. Then it followed Doris down to the air-raid shelter, where we've dumped a whole lot of stuff we never want to set eyes on again, and it's handy too for oddments you don't want everybody to see, and the dog got so excited we knew there must be mice, and Doris said she'd never dare to go down again till I got back in case they were rats, because we knew a girl at Woolwich and they used to have ferrets in and regular rat hunts all round the office and we should be terrified.

But we had to get Mr. Head off first, and at last he was just collecting his hat and gloves and umbrella and dog and suitcase when some more post came in and we thought that put the lid on. But he's learning sense by now and said he wouldn't open it in case there was anything that wanted answering. So that was one of us out of the way, and then we both of us stayed till seven clearing up all the things we'd had to drop till he'd gone and all the things I'd got to warn Doris about in case those Works typists came worrying her. Talk about busy bees! Doris said it was nearly as bad getting me off as Mr. Head when she came to the station with me early next morning to see me into the queue.

It rather got me down having to stand all the way, but I sat on my suitcase in the corridor with another girl who was in the same boat, and we

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agreed it all made a change and if you didn't go away sometimes how ever would you get all the odd jobs done like buying a new toothbrush and putting fresh elastic in that you never do do unless you do.

I suppose you can't expect too much in November, but I did think one fine morning and one dull afternoon and the rest of the time just pelting down was a bit too much, and so nasty and raw too, but of course our climate aways overdoes it. And then the first thing I saw when I got back was that milk is going to be short because of the wet, and last thing they were telling us it was short because of the drought. There's no pleasing some cows!

However, it was nice to see the sea, being about the only place that doesn't look as if it badly wants doing up by now, and Jim, my boy-friend in the Drawing Office, came down for the weekend. But it's as hard nowadays to get a cup of tea out of hours as a glass of beer, with everywhere closing straight after lunch till they feel like it. You can understand Doris thinking canteens for civilians would be a good idea. Still, once you are inside you're as right as rain and soon get dry enough to go out into the wet again, though after all the soakings I got it'll take me a bit yet to get properly dehydrated.

Still we managed to get about a bit, thanks to the buses, because if we'd stuck to Shanks's pony like the posters tell you we'd never have got on a bus. And it was lovely to have windows with

no net you could see through, and a pretty good service too, considering; always a spare bus waiting where you had to change labelled

PRIVATE
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which Jim said must be the local equivalent of Public Assistance.

I must say I've never bought Christmas cards on my summer holidays before, but if it comes to that there's a lot of things in this war we never expected, like being alive at all after five years of it if anybody had told you at the beginning. But after all those quiet nights I will say it seemed strange to come back and find the war still on, though of course an odd siren now and again seems only a flea-bite after all the doodlebugs.

As soon as I got back and we'd told each other all about everything and what the food was like, nothing would satisfy Doris but to borrow her girl-friend who's in the Civil Service's cat Winston, though Jim told her it wasn't mice in the shelter that was wrong with them both but bats in the belfry. However, she had to wait a bit anyway, Winston having been a bit off colour, though his coat's still a beautiful glossy black with all the woman-handling he gets, and the vet gave them a bottle of medicine that cost 3s. 6d., and I must say I wondered myself if a new cat wouldn't have come out cheaper, not being on coupons either like the new curtains he's almost scratched to bits.

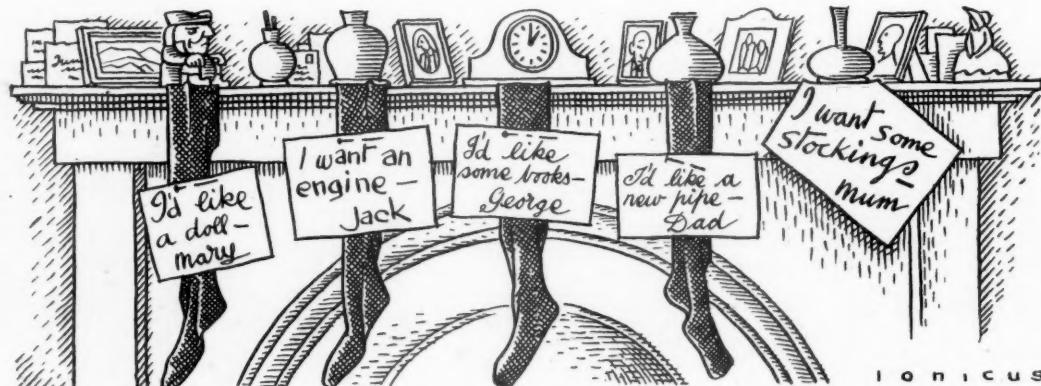
But Doris and her girl-friend think

the world of Winston, though we've all decided by now he's about as pig-headed an invalid as his namesake, for when they put his bed by the fire after the first dose of medicine he stayed out all night and came home without his identity disc, which makes three he's gone through now as well as two lives—though what I want them to ask the Narpac people next time is what the registered goldfish do with their discs.

Anyway Winston's beginning to come a bit expensive, what with the horse-meat and all, and Doris and I both thought a mouse or two would be a help perhaps. So we took him down to the shelter one afternoon and pushed him in quick and shut the door and told the office boy he wasn't to go near him.

After tea Doris and I went down with a drop of milk we'd saved, and everything sounded so quiet we felt there was something fishy about it and were sure Willie had been up to some of his monkey tricks again because there wasn't a sign of Winston anywhere till we found him fast asleep in a packing-case under the window that was full of bits of brown paper and claws and shell that never came off any rat or mouse we'd ever seen. And suddenly we heard Mr. Head coming down the steps and he called to us would we bring up the brown-paper parcel he'd left on the window-sill.

But that's Winston all over—to get himself shut up in the shelter the day Mr. Head came back from lunch with a couple of lobsters.



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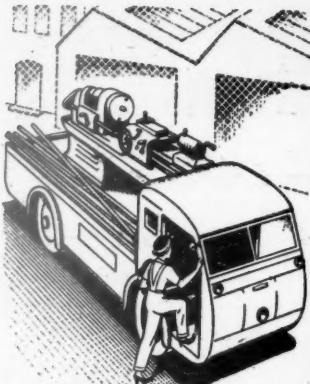
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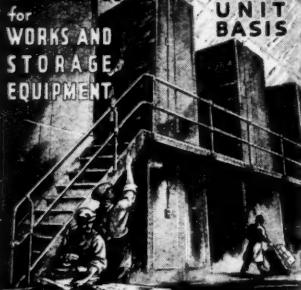
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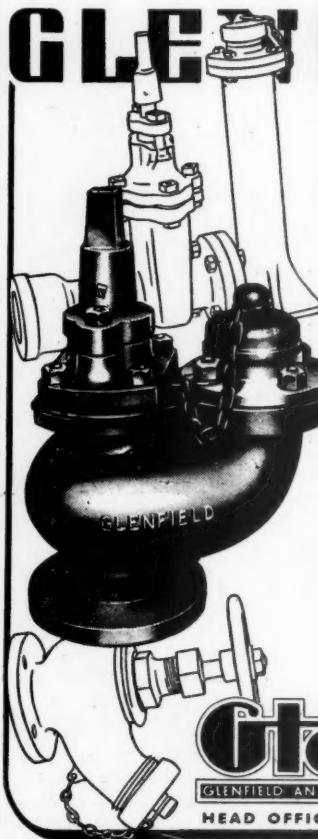
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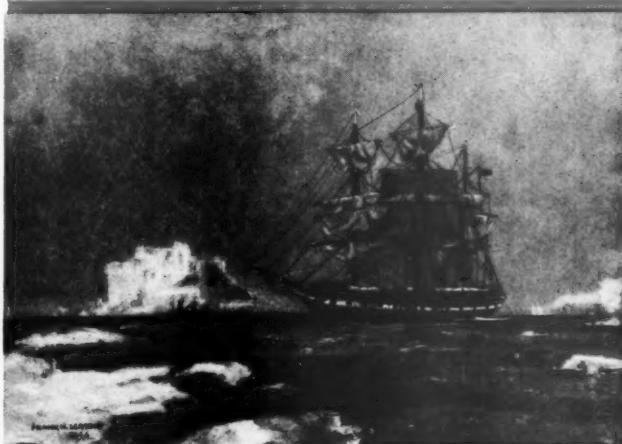


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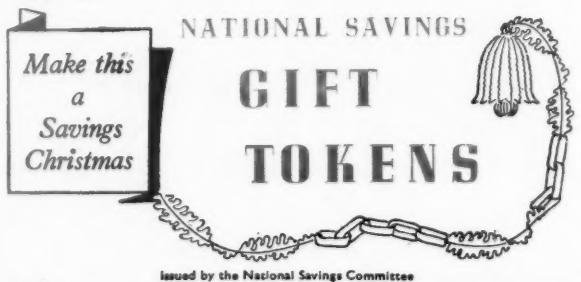
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